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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Monterey, California



THESIS

**THE USE OF INTERNET TECHNOLOGY IN NAVY
RECRUITING: THE ONLINE RECRUITING STATION
(ORS)**

by

R. Nicholas Dodge

March 1999

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**THE USE OF INTERNET TECHNOLOGY IN NAVY RECRUITING: THE
ONLINE RECRUITING STATION (ORS)**

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B.A., Millersville University of Pennsylvania, 1986

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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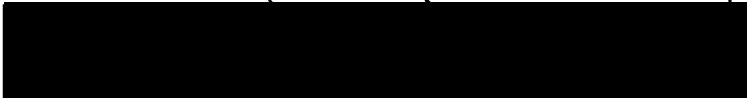
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ABSTRACT

The Navy's annual task of recruiting up to sixty-thousand "high-quality" recruits has become more difficult in recent years. The primary objective of this thesis was to develop an Internet-based "mock-up" of an Online Recruiting Station (ORS) to benefit military recruiting. An ORS Web-site was created with the assistance of a contractor (and funding support from the Commander, Navy Recruiting Command). Several interactive elements were constructed as part of the ORS, including a wide range of linked Web pages for a "virtual recruiter" environment. A focus group of high school students was then assembled to evaluate the ORS "mock-up." Focus group participants were able to identify the purpose and concept of the ORS "mock-up." The participants appreciated many of the features of the ORS, and felt that it offered a "comfortable" alternative to dealing directly with a military recruiter. Further development of the ORS is recommended so that it may become fully integrated into the military's recruiting process.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

The Navy recruits between fifty and sixty-thousand personnel every year. The Navy's recruiting task has become more difficult in recent years. For example, in FY 1998, the Navy fell about 6,900 contracts short of its goal of 55,321¹. The impact of this shortfall will be felt for many years. For recruiting to improve, the Navy must address a few key issues and take a more innovative approach toward attracting young volunteers.

One reason why young people do not enlist is simply that they do not know much about the military; and what they do know, or think they know, may actually be wrong. Another reason is that military recruiting commands rely heavily on face-to-face contact between recruiters and potential recruits to stimulate interest in enlisting and to initiate the recruitment process. But, given the characteristics of today's youth, it is not surprising that the face-to-face approach often fails.

One way to address the shortcomings of the current recruiting system is to search for new recruiting philosophies and practices. The Chief of Naval Operations, Vice Admiral Jay Johnson, alluded to the need for creative thinking in the foreword to the Navy's strategic plan, "Vision...Presence...Power." VADM Johnson wrote:

My challenge to the Navy is to think even more radically and innovatively as we enter the 21st century. We must continually search for innovative and efficient solutions to the challenges we face today and those we will encounter in the years ahead. Above all, we must dedicate ourselves to building a strong, balanced Navy that will prevail today, tomorrow, and for decades to come — anytime, anywhere! (Johnson, 1998)

¹ Source: The Detroit News 11 Jun. 1998 <<http://www.detnews.com/1998/action/9806/11/06110132>>.

The Internet presents a possible solution to meeting the military's current recruiting challenges. It has already revolutionized the way people do business in the private sector. Certain service areas, such as travel agencies, have been greatly affected by the Internet. Others, such as the automobile and real estate sales industries, are being forced to reevaluate the way they operate in reaction to the expanding use of Internet technology by consumers. Now, in the private sector, more and more firms are advertising job vacancies, and evaluating and hiring personnel directly through the Internet.

As Steve Case, President of the Internet service provider, America Online, wrote in a letter to his customers:

More than eight in ten online consumers say the Internet makes their every day lives easier and more convenient. When asked about 16 everyday tasks like finding financial information, shopping, and education, online consumers say doing these activities online are easier than "the way they used to do it." The majority believes that the Internet is poised to most greatly affect education, the workplace, the media and entertainment.

What's most amazing about the evolution of this medium is that, for all of the successes and attention it has attracted, we are really at the beginning of its evolution. It's comparable to the telephone in the 1920s or the television in the 1950s and it's being integrated into society at a speed much greater than either of those media.

Only one-quarter of American households are online today and, of those, nearly two-thirds got connected within the past two years. As more people get connected, and people embed interactive services even more in their lives, I'm sure we'll see attitudes change even more dramatically over the years. (Case, 1998)

The trends discussed by Case and other observers of Internet technology should, at the very least, arouse the curiosity of military recruiting commands. But, given the results of the FY1998 recruiting effort and the predictable, reactive response by the

military, recruiting leaders would be better prepared to deal with the future if they took more decisive action now by launching a full-scale study of opportunities available through the Internet. There is no doubt that Internet technology will continue to transform consumer behavior and the way people access information. Military recruiting, for some reason, has been slow in recognizing this trend, as it clings tenaciously to traditional practice.

B. PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The idea for this thesis came about as a result of classroom discussions about the increasing challenges faced by military recruiting commands. To address these challenges, the author wanted to develop a "Virtual Recruiter" to replace human recruiters. This study explores the expanded use of Internet technology to benefit Navy recruiting. An Internet-based mock-up, referred to as the Online Recruiting Station (ORS), illustrates the study's concept.

The primary objective of this thesis is to design an ORS mock-up that adequately portrays the author's vision. The clear presentation of this vision is critical to future research efforts. Chapter II examines previous studies to establish a foundation for designing a Web site and its various features. Chapter III provides a thorough description of the individual pages that comprise the ORS mock-up. A 3.5-inch floppy disk containing the HTML script and image files is included as an attachment to the thesis. The mock-up can be viewed by opening the Index.htm file in any browser.

To evaluate how effectively this mock-up represents the underlying concept, the mock-up was presented to a focus group of high school students. Chapter IV discusses the reactions of the focus group to the ORS.

Finally, Chapter V presents the conclusions drawn from the study. Chapter V also includes the author's recommendations for further research regarding the military's use of the Internet.

II. BACKGROUND

A. TARGET MARKET CHARACTERISTICS: A DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW GENERATION

They are referred to as "Baby Busters," "Twenty-Somethings," "Generation X'ers," "Millenium Generation," and "Generation Y'ers." These are the terms used to describe the military's primary pool of potential recruits in the U.S. population. Although it may be somewhat dangerous to lump people together based solely on when they were born, there seems to be no better way to understand the military's so-called "target market."² And since this is the generation upon which future recruiting efforts must focus, it is important to have some understanding of the group's tendencies and behavior.

Unlike the generations before them, youth of today have had considerable exposure to dual-income, divorced, and single-parent families. This environment has fostered a relatively strong sense of independence among today's youth. Many have become accustomed to getting themselves ready for school, cooking for themselves, arranging transportation to and from extracurricular activities, and other amenities that youth from previous generations took for granted. Because of their experience with relatively greater independence, these youth may now prefer to care for themselves rather than rely on others.

Having grown up with the threat of AIDS, drugs, acid rain, global warming, and terrorism, most of which they learned from watching television, there is very little that

this generation fears. Referring to this particular characteristic, a Navy Times cover story observes: "That can be good--like not fearing hardship or challenges. But it can also mean not fearing authority, which can mean trouble when dealing with older officers, chiefs, and staff NCO's who still try to motivate through fear." (Navy Times, 1997)

"Baby Boomers" were forced, out of survival, to accommodate computers and other forms of information technology. Today's generations, on the other hand, are not awed by such technology. The Navy Times cover story also observes: "The [generations of today] love computers, the Internet, and other technological innovations [and] sometimes find the older computers at sea behind the curve." (Navy Times, 1997)

As Bruce Tulgan (1997) writes: "Generation X'ers grew up at a time when going to the moon was already history [and] money came from machines. The hyper-frenetic pace of their culture only seems to pick up momentum as each year passes. Progress is not threatening. It is our state of nature." Tulgan (1997) also notes that, "overshadowed by the material excesses of their 'yuppie' predecessors, X'ers reject the notion that happiness can be found in a 'purchased lifestyle' of condos, BMWs and luxury health clubs." But today's generations are very confident in their ability to make money as civilians and place a high value on "quality of life" issues. Living with three other roommates in a barracks or ship's quarters is not appealing to them. It is such attitudes that make recruiting these youth so challenging.

² The target population for military recruiting commands is generally considered to be youth between the ages of 17 and 21 years old.

Tulgan (1997) summarizes this generation as follows:

We are used to taking care of ourselves and we are used to finding original solutions to intractable problems. What looks to managers like arrogance is, in fact, confidence. We expect things to change quickly and are comfortable with our abilities to keep up. All in all, we are independent, concerned about the environment, distrust institutions and organized religions, and crave feedback. We don't want orders without explanations or to be treated like we are in the fifth grade.

Understanding the characteristics of a particular generation of recruiting prospects is important to military recruiting commands. These commands use this information in ways that range from formulating marketing and advertising campaigns to educating recruiters.

B. TARGET MARKET CHARACTERISTICS: THE PROPENSITY TO ENLIST

Wilson, Berkowitz, and Lehnus (1994) characterize the target market in another way when they divide youth into four propensity³ groups: Joiners, Non-Joiners, Shifters, and Fence-Sitters. A person is considered a "Joiner" if he or she exhibits positive enlistment propensity. "Non-Joiners," on the other hand, exhibit negative propensity. "Shifters" are those who indicate they have previously considered enlisting, but no longer intend to join. "Fence-Sitters" are simply persons who give positive responses to some questions and negative responses to others when asked about their opinions of military service.

As Wilson et al. (1996) state, "Demographically, Joiners are predominately from less well-to-do working or lower middle-class homes, reside in smaller towns or rural environments, [and are primarily motivated to join the military] to gain access to training

and benefits.” Of the four groups, Joiners tend to be the easiest to characterize demographically.

Non-Joiners are not as easy to identify demographically. Family socioeconomic status for this group tends to range from extremely poor to extremely wealthy. No particular geographic region is prevalent among Non-Joiners. And it makes no difference whether the individual is college-bound or not. About the only characteristic that most "Non-Joiners" have in common is a lack of a family tradition of military service.

Shifters tend to represent a broader range of socioeconomic status, geographic region, age, and college aspiration, than do Non-Joiners. Shifters can be separated into two major subgroups—college and non-college aspirants. College aspirants often see the military as a way to pay for their education. Non-college aspirants, on the other hand, consider the military as an avenue for self-improvement. As Wilson et al. (1996) write: “Shifters demonstrated a consistently negative view toward recruiters, [reporting] that false or misleading information was the turning point in career decision-making. After that point, military enlistment was no longer considered.”

Fence-Sitters tend to come from lower middle-class families, are generally younger than the other classes, and are not usually college-oriented. Most see the military as an avenue to gain respect through hard work and endurance. Fence-Sitters, however, also tend to distrust recruiters, but suggest that this distrust does not have a material influence on their enlistment decision.

³ Propensity is defined as the stated likelihood of an individual to enlist in military service within a designated period following the statement.

C. THE RECRUITING PROCESS

To attract sufficient numbers of recruits from this target population, the military has spent over \$180 million, or more than 11 percent of the total DOD recruiting budget, for advertising and marketing.⁴ Advertising methods range from paid national television ads to public service announcements, national and local radio spots, and mass mailings. The ad campaigns are designed to appeal not only the potential recruits but also to their influencers--teachers, parents, coaches, clergy, and so on.

While advertising is an important tool to recruiting commands, the services believe that face-to-face contact with a military recruiter is necessary to enlist applicants. The recruiters operate from recruiting stations, which are strategically placed throughout the country and overseas. The following excerpt is from a 1994 General Accounting Office (GAO) report to Congress. This passage provides a fairly comprehensive discussion of the current recruiting process.

In many cases, recruiters are applicants' sole source of information on the benefits of their services. Recruiters provide information on military jobs, associated training, financial incentives, terms of enlistment, and the unique lifestyles offered by the services.

Recruiters convey their message by several means, such as making presentations at area high schools, canvassing places of employment, and contacting prospective enlistees directly. The Army estimates that a recruiter makes over 100 contacts to enlist a single quality recruit.

Once applicants have decided to enlist in a military service, the recruiter schedules them for processing at the nearest Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS). At the MEPS, applicants take the [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery], are given medical examinations, and meet with representatives of their chosen service. These service representatives provide lists of military occupations for which the applicants are qualified on the basis of their [Armed Forces Qualification Test] scores and certain

⁴ This figure represents the appropriated amount for FY 1986. By 1994, the programmed amount fell to \$73.8 million, which represented less than 7 percent of the total DOD recruiting budget. (GAO, 1994)

other factors, such as medical or moral qualifications⁵.

Once an applicant has chosen a military job, the service representative at the MEPS draws up a contract for either the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) or immediate active or reserve duty. Nearly all applicants⁶ join the DEP; that is, they do not immediately report for active duty, [and they may postpone service entry for one year or somewhat longer]. The services require several months to complete background investigations and, [in some cases], await applicants' completion of high school and receipt of transcripts. [Once the DEP waiting period has expired, the recruit] returns to the MEPS, undergoes a short medical examination, and is sworn into the service. After recruits are sworn in, they are shipped to basic training locations.

All [military] services target 17- to 21-year-old high school graduates who score in the upper categories of the AFQT. The services believe [that] individuals between 17 and 21 years of age are more likely to consider joining the military than they are at any other age. The services also believe that [high-quality]⁷ recruits are less likely to pose discipline problems and are more likely to complete their first terms of enlistment. (GAO, 1994)

As part of the application process, recruits are asked several questions regarding their personal credit and criminal histories. A background check, which can take up to 6 months to complete, is conducted to verify the moral character of the recruit. In some cases, though, the recruit may already have begun or even completed recruit training⁸ before the results of the background check are discovered. In cases where a background check has revealed past criminal history that is unacceptable for military service, the recruit is released from active duty. As noted in the Navy Times, in this way,

⁵ The AFQT is a test composite derived from a combination of verbal and mathematics subtests on the ASVAB.

⁶ If found qualified, about 10 percent of those eligible will be sent to boot camp within a week or two. The other 90 percent wait for up to 12 months in the DEP, so that they can complete high school or fill a scheduled vacancy at one of several recruit training centers. (Philpott, 1997)

⁷ "High quality recruits" are high school diploma graduates who score at or above the 50th percentile on the AFQT.

⁸ A 1995 review of Defense Department research concluded that as many as 30 percent of all new recruits enlist with a juvenile or adult arrest record, and less than half of these are typically identified before joining. Recruits with an arrest record are 65 percent more likely than other recruits to be discharged for "unsuitability." (Compart, 1997)

the "security threat posed by the person is eliminated, but dismissal adds to the military's problem of getting recruits to complete their initial enlistment." (Maze, 1998)

To enable earlier and better screening of recruits regarding their criminal record, recruiting officials have requested that Congress enact legislation giving them easier access to juvenile records. The current screening process requires that recruiters request state and local agencies to perform a record search on a potential recruit. If the agency complies, it may charge up to \$45 for each record search. The new legislation would reduce the maximum fee to five dollars. This request was rejected, however, because of concerns for an individual's privacy. (Maze, 1998)

The current recruiting system has provided the military with an adequate supply of enlistees since the end of the draft in 1973, but it has not been easy attracting the requisite number of volunteers from year to year. Indeed, in recent years, with a strong national economy and low unemployment, the military services have had to work as hard as ever to attract high-quality recruits. To get a better understanding of the target population and its perceptions about the military, DOD and the military services sponsor numerous studies each year. The goal of some of these studies is to identify and, later, to address the concerns of the target population in a way that will remove some of the challenges faced by recruiters. The next section discusses two such studies.

D. PROBLEMS WITH THE CURRENT RECRUITING SYSTEM

Some of the problems with the current recruiting system are the result of factors that are external and usually beyond the control of the military. External factors that affect the annual recruiting drive include the unemployment rate, the state of the economy, the size of the recruiting pool, the characteristics of the population, public

support of the military, and the propensity of youth to join the military.⁹ Other factors, which are internal to the organization, also affect the military's ability to recruit. These factors include recruiting system operations, advertising and recruiting budgets, numbers and placement of recruiters, attractions to join (such as training opportunities, pay, benefits, and so on), enlistment standards, and certain other recruiting or service policies.

1. The Youth Attitude Tracking Study: Feedback From the Target Market

The Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS) was initiated in 1975, although it evolved from previous studies of the youth market before the end of the draft. Through the use of a telephone survey instrument, a nationally representative sample of the attitudes of 16-24 year-old men and women is used to analyze factors related to enlistment propensity. Research has shown that propensity predicts actual enlistment, making the propensity estimate a key measure for policy makers and analysts. The YATS survey also allows for the description and assessment of the recruiting marketplace. By querying the participants, valuable information is obtained concerning future plans, media habits, advertising awareness, influences, and perceptions. (Lehnus, 1996)

In a YATS survey conducted in the Fall of 1997, respondents were asked about trust, parental influence, and recruiter tactics. Selected questions and their tabulated responses are presented in Appendix A¹⁰.

⁹ The propensity of youth to enlist in the military may be affected by factors internal and external to the system. For example, the change or adoption of a particular policy by the military, an internal factor, can affect on a person's decision to become a part of the organization. A change in the unemployment rate or in the availability of jobs in the civilian sector, an external factor can also affect a youth's propensity to pursue the military as a source of employment.

¹⁰ Only questions relevant to this thesis are included. These questions are specific to recruiter trust, parental influence, and recruiter tactics. There are many more questions that are not relevant to this thesis.

Of the 10,163 youths surveyed in the Fall 1997 YATS, approximately 39 percent said they believed or somewhat believed that recruiters mislead potential recruits or do not present a truthful picture of the military. This is consistent with previous studies. For example, as Lehnus and Wilson (1996) observe: "Youth are skeptical of the information they get from the recruiting services." In another study, Wilson, Berkowitz, and Lehnus (1996) found the following: "Similar to Shifters¹¹, recruiters are generally viewed with mistrust by Fence-Sitters¹². Several respondents seriously considering enlistment complained of 'pushy, used car salesman' recruiters."

Aside from the distrust that youth often have for military recruiters, many may lack a certain level of understanding about the military. In fact, distrust and a lack of understanding may go hand-in-hand. Potential recruits may not trust recruiters, yet most of their information about military service necessarily comes from the recruiters themselves. It follows, then, that some potential recruits may not trust the information they receive. The common denominator in the equation is the recruiter.

While trust among target populations may affect the military's recruiting effort, it is not the only problem with the current system. Lehnus and Wilson (1995) write: "The most common reason not to join [the military] deals with the military lifestyle. Focus groups suggest many youth have a 'boot camp' perception of military service, and many young men believe military life is too 'regimented' for their tastes. These perceptions of military life surely hinder the Services' ability to recruit top-quality personnel." In other

¹¹ Youth who reported that they had previously considered enlistment but that their current propensity is consistently negative. (Wilson, *et al.*, 1996)

¹² Youth who gave positive responses to some propensity questions and negative responses to others. (Wilson, *et al.*, 1996)

words, youth don't know much about the military, and what they do know, or think they know, may actually be wrong.

The 1995 YATS showed that youth generally lack specific, factual information, and that some have inaccurate information about the military. (Wilson et al., 1996) A 1996 Department of Defense report on a series of focus groups suggested that "these youths were clearly intimidated by what they believed would be the countless humiliations of boot camp such as recruits being yelled at, submission to what they perceived as pointless discipline and unwarranted humiliation or scrubbing a washroom with a toothbrush. When asked what military life would be like after boot camp, youth did not seem to know if the perils of boot camp would continue once they were in their first assignment."

YATS is effective in determining the attitudes of the target population and the external and internal factors that affect decisions to enlist. This information is certainly important. But other studies are also needed to determine the overall efficiency of the system.

2. Congressional Inquiry into Recruiting System Practices and Policies

The military operates with a finite budget that is appropriated annually. The services do their best to make the most of the limited funding that they receive. Occasionally, Congress, especially when faced with tighter fiscal constraints, evaluates how efficiently the military is spending its money.

In 1993, Senator David Pryor (D-AR) asked GAO to "survey military recruiting policies and practices and highlight areas in which the Department of Defense (DOD) could reduce its recruiting costs without adversely affecting its ability to meet military

personnel requirements." (GAO, 1994) One specific area of interest was "the services' management of their recruiting staffs and organizations." (GAO, 1994)

GAO conducted its review between July 1993 and August 1994. GAO reviewed previous studies that were conducted by DOD and the individual services, met with representatives of research organizations¹³, and interviewed DOD, service, Naval Audit Service (NAS) and Congressional Budget Office (CBO) officials. GAO analyzed data on service accessions, recruit quality, service budgets, recruiting support and production, and service attrition.

The GAO study (1994) resulted in several findings, all of which centered around a theme of inefficiency. GAO suggested that these inefficiencies were the result of factors such as the services overstating their future challenges in recruiting, being resistant to organizational change, and needing to find opportunities for savings other than closing and realigning recruiting offices. It is this final factor, the closing and realigning of offices, which is particularly relevant to the present research.

The 1994 GAO study of military recruiting practices points to several specific inefficiencies:

The services [believe they] should maintain a recruiting presence in most geographical areas, even if the recruiting offices are unproductive or marginally productive.

The services have begun to explore various alternatives to fixed recruiting facilities that could enable them to identify, contact, and respond to inquiries from potential recruits. These alternatives, some of which involve advances in technology, call into question the traditional functions of the recruiting office.

The lease cost for DOD's nearly 6,000 recruiting facilities is about \$86 million for FY 1994. GAO's analysis indicates 50 percent of DOD's

¹³ These organizations included, but were not limited to, the Rand Corporation and the Army Research Institute (ARI).

recruiting offices, which require the assignment of about 2,800 recruiters and cost about \$13.3 million annually to lease, produce just 13.5 percent of accessions. (GAO, 1994)

One recommendation by GAO was that the military services should encourage the development and expansion of new concepts in the management of recruiting facilities. Some of these concepts include further reductions in recruiting management layers, the establishment of a joint DOD recruiting organization, and the consolidation of the services' active and reserve recruiting.

As discussed in the GAO report, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY1993 required the services to reduce recruiting personnel by 10 percent. Even though the services have reduced their recruiting forces in response to the 1993 Act, the overall structure of their recruiting organizations has remained unchanged.

Proposals to consolidate recruiting functions for the military as a whole have been consistently rejected by the services. These proposals, which include merging recruiting organizations into one command and consolidating support functions, had projected savings of \$240 million and \$150 million, respectively, over three years. The services cited concerns that ranged from fear of eroding service identification to large variations in service requirements as reasons to reject such proposals. (GAO, 1994)

GAO analyzed a database that contained new recruits from the 1,036 counties in the United States where recruiting offices are located. The analysis showed that recruiting offices in the most productive 25 percent of the counties accounted for about 70 percent of all recruits.¹⁴ On the other hand, offices in the least productive 25 percent of the counties were responsible for fewer than 4 percent of the recruits. Overall, the

least productive 50 percent of all recruiting stations accounted for about 13.5 percent of the total. Further analysis revealed that almost 28 percent of the counties only produced one recruit in that same period. This variation in productivity translated into office lease costs per recruit that ranged from \$18 to \$14,355, where the lower cost represented a recruit in the most productive office and the higher cost represented a recruit in the least productive office. (GAO, 1994)

In an attempt to reduce the costs in a remote, marginally productive, or unproductive, full-time recruiting office, some of the services have begun to take innovative approaches to attract recruits. One such approach is the "Recruiting Vehicle." Recruiting Vehicles are recreational vehicles equipped with computers, communications gear, and a team of recruiters. These vehicles are driven between remote sites so that persons living in these areas can have access to military opportunities. So far, however, there have been no data collected on the effectiveness of the Recruiting Vehicles.

E. CURRENT "INNOVATIVE" RESEARCH AND PRACTICES

Lately, the military services have begun to use the Internet as an inexpensive and efficient method of disseminating information. The Navy recruiting Web site, "Navyjobs.com," is an elaborately designed, online brochure. In this site, persons interested in learning about the military, particularly the Navy, can navigate through pages of information to get the knowledge they seek. Available around-the-clock, this site provides information on pay, benefits, training opportunities, and lifestyle. Actually, all of the military services have Internet Web sites similar to "Navyjobs.com."¹⁵

¹⁴ These figures were for the first 5 months of FY 1994 (GAO, 1994).

¹⁵ The Army site is located at <<http://www.goarmy.com>>. The Air Force site is located at <<http://www.airforce.com>>. The Marine Corps site is located at <<http://www.marines.com>>.

Unfortunately, such sites do not even begin to make use of the full potential of this medium.

One Navy-affiliated organization has begun to explore the possible benefits of using the Internet and the World Wide Web to assist recruiting. As Palin (1998) writes:

The Institute for Defense Education and Analysis (IDEA) of the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, has recommended the development of a virtual community on the World Wide Web, called Fleet Academy, as a helpful means of developing a positive Navy identity among 12 to 16 year olds. This virtual community would include several programming elements designed to attract and engage the target population, but of particular importance is a gaming element, initially deployed as an online "trading-card game" called Sea Power! Prior market studies conducted on behalf of the Navy have found a very positive preexisting affinity for the Navy among 12 to 16 year old males. In many respects, the Fleet Academy concept is designed to build on this affinity and maintain it through the high school years. The goal is to deepen and broaden the potential pool of Navy recruits at age 16 and 17. This web-based identity program is also seen as having branding benefits for the Navy beyond recruiting purposes. (Palin, 1998)

IDEA continues to explore development of the Fleet Academy. Unfortunately, unless it receives financial support from the military, it will likely be forced to abandon the project due to lack of resources.

F. THE INTERNET AND THE WORLDWIDE WEB (WWW)

What, exactly, is the Internet? In 1969, Bolt, Beranek, and Newman (BBN) developed an electronic network for the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the U.S. Department of Defense. This network of computers, radios, and satellites was called the ARPAnet. Initially developed to provide a survivable means of communications in the aftermath of a nuclear event, the ARPAnet eventually evolved into a means for researchers to exchange information. In 1973, ARPA, renamed DARPA for Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, started a program called the

Internetting Project. This project was to study how to link various packet networks to each other. This Internetting Project evolved into what is known today as the Internet. Simply put, the Internet is a global network of computer networks. (Ziff-Davis, 1998)

Clearly, the Internet has evolved well beyond being a means of exchanging research information, although it is still used for that purpose. Today, numerous industries are being forced to redefine the way they conduct business, simply as a result of the influence of the Internet.

One example is the travel industry. In the past, travelers who required airline tickets, car rentals, and hotel reservations called upon a travel agent to arrange reservations. Now, because of the Internet, travelers can easily arrange their own reservations and find the best prices available, without the use of a third-party agency. (Ziff-Davis, 1998)

The automobile industry is another sector that has been affected by the Internet. Since 1995, car dealership owners and salesmen have seen a drastic change in their industry. Prior to 1995, the car dealership and its sales force were in the driver's seat in the sales negotiation process; now, it is the customer who has a decided advantage. Customers now have access to dealer invoices and factory incentive information available on the Internet, which gives the customer much greater power in dealing with the dealers. Some dealers, in an effort to accommodate the advanced technology, have established sites on the Internet where customers can purchase vehicles online, without the need for salesmen. The cost-savings associated with a reduction in the sales force enables these dealerships to sell vehicles at or below dealer invoice, and still turn a profit. (CyberAtlas, 1998)

The Internet is here and it is here to stay. Today, approximately 30 percent of all households, and 61 percent of households with a personal computer (PC), have access to the Internet. (Ziff-Davis, 1998) This represents a 30-percent increase between January and June of 1998. Internet usage is greater for persons with higher household income and education levels. Almost a third of U.S. households that are connected to the Internet have an annual income of at least \$75,000. The presence of children in the home also appears to account for a higher incidence of Internet access. Internet penetration among households with children is around 37 percent, compared with 25 percent for those without access to the Internet. (CyberAtlas, 1998)

On the other hand, persons living in rural areas at the lowest income levels are among the least connected. Rural households earning less than \$5,000 per year have the lowest PC-ownership rates (7.9 percent) and online access rates (2.3 percent), followed by urban areas (10.5 percent and 4.4 percent, respectively) and central cities (11 percent and 4.6 percent, respectively). (CyberAtlas, 1998)

Racial/ethnic differences are also found among Internet users. Blacks, for example, have the lowest PC-ownership rates in rural areas (14.9 percent), followed by Blacks and Hispanics in central cities (17.1 percent and 16.2 percent, respectively). Online access is also the lowest for Black households in rural areas (5.5 percent) and central cities (5.8 percent), followed by Hispanic households in central cities (7.0 percent) and in rural areas (7.3 percent). (CyberAtlas, 1998)

Single-parent, female-headed households are also significantly less likely than dual-parent households to have a PC (25 percent versus 57.2 percent) or to have online access (9.2 percent versus 29.4 percent). Female-headed households in central cities are

particularly unlikely to own PCs or have online access (20.2 percent and 6.4 percent, respectively), compared with dual-parent households (52 percent and 27.3 percent, respectively) or male-headed households (28 percent and 11.2 percent, respectively) in the same areas. (CyberAtlas, 1998)

The following excerpt is from a December 1998 letter written by Steve Case, President of America Online.

The next century will be defined by the integration of the Internet into people's lives, into society and into our global economy. By almost any measure, the Internet truly came of age in 1998. Its phenomenal growth rate accelerated, bringing tens of millions of people online for the first time. Its influence was clearly felt in many aspects of our lives including politics, education, business, and media. Interactive services like personal finance and online shopping skyrocketed in popularity and more and more people began to use interactive services as an important tool for making their lives easier and more convenient.

G. SUMMARY

The current recruiting system was put in place over twenty-five years ago. It has virtually remained unchanged since that time. Unfortunately for the military, the characteristics of the target market *have* changed. The current generation of young people do not trust institutions (the military) or the representatives of the institutions (the recruiter). Further, they tend to be technically oriented and independent.

The military invented Internet technology almost thirty years ago. Its use by the military has been relatively light since that time. The private sector has worked diligently in those years to make the Internet what it is today. These advances in Internet technology made by the private sector may have some practical applications in military recruiting.

III. THE ONLINE RECRUITING STATION (ORS)

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE ONLINE RECRUITING STATION (ORS)

The Online Recruiting Station (ORS) is a proposed alternative or supplement to the current recruiting system. Through the use of Internet technology, the ORS has the potential to realize cost savings in DOD recruiting. Because of the limited funding available for the development of this mock-up, it was not possible to create a fully functional model. This chapter describes the individual pages in the ORS.

1. Mock-up Development

With funding from Commander, Navy Recruiting Command (CNRC), the author contracted Infopoint, an Internet design firm in Santa Cruz, California to write the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) source code and create the graphic design. Upon completion of this study, the rights to the HTML source code will be released to CNRC.

The mock-up is designed for application in the enlisted recruiting environment. With changes in content and format, the ORS can also accommodate officer, medical, and other specialty recruiting programs.

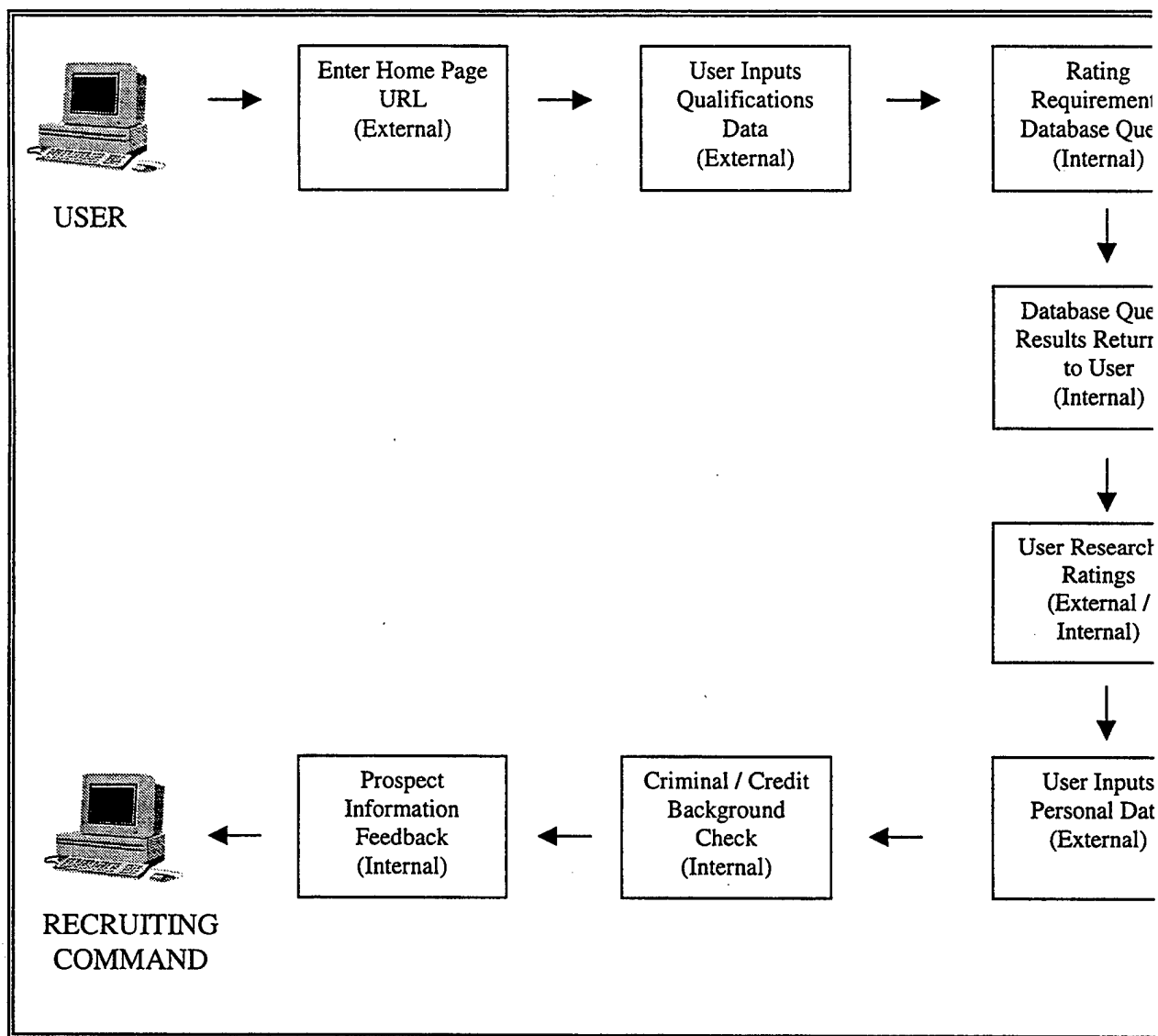
The Web pages described in this chapter are intended to represent concept possibilities and encourage innovative thinking beyond the limitations of the current recruiting process. With that in mind, the reader is encouraged to focus on the *concept* of ORS, rather than on facts and figures or possible inconsistencies with current marketing and advertising principles. Some of the concepts represented in these pages may not be in full compliance with current policy. In these cases, the reader is encouraged, once again, to focus on the concept.

B. PAGE DESCRIPTION

This section provides a description of the individual pages that make up the ORS mock-up. Because of the limited funding available for the development of this mock-up, features such as audio and video presentations, satellite links, chat rooms, examinations, and applications could not be included. Even though these features are not included, references to them are made in this section to explain the possibilities afforded by this concept and to clarify the author's vision.

Diagram 1 is a simple illustration of the data flow and capture of the ORS. It shows the general flow of inputs and data from the user to the recruiter. Inputs to the system are made externally by the user. The data are then evaluated or routed by commands that are internal to the system.

The user initiates the access to the Home Page (Appendix B: Figure 1) by entering the site URL into any browser. Once in the site, the user has several path options, but will initially elect to enter the Qualifications Questionnaire Page (Appendix B: Figure 2). The user completes and submits the questionnaire. The questionnaire data are then evaluated internally as a database query. The results of the database query are displayed to the user on the Results Page (Appendix B: Figure 3). At this point, the user has several options, which are discussed in the next section, to research a rating. The user may contact a recruiter by submitting the completed questionnaire on the Personal Information Page (Appendix B: Figure 8). The information from this questionnaire is sent through an internal background check. The results of the background check and the user's personal information are displayed to the nearest recruiting command on the Prospect Information Page (Appendix B: Figure9).



Source: Author.

Diagram 1. ORS Data Flow and Capture Diagram

1. The Home Page

The Home Page is displayed when the URL of the ORS is entered into any Internet browser¹⁶. Appendix B: Figure 1 shows the Home Page. Due to the limited funding available for the development of this mock-up, it was not possible to include more than five links on the Home Page. The links included here were chosen to best illustrate the overall concept of the project.

Link 1 is a hyperlink to the Qualification Questionnaire Page. This page is key to initiating the interactivity of the Web site. The Qualification Questionnaire Page is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Link 2 is a hyperlink to the Repeat Visitor Log-In Page. This page is available to respondents who have been to the site before and want to continue researching without completing the qualification questionnaire again. The Repeat Visitor Log-In Page is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Link 3 is a hyperlink to Navy general and rating specific chat rooms. Each specific rating page also has a hyperlink to these chat rooms. Chat rooms are discussed later in this chapter.

Link 4 is a hyperlink to the Virtual Fleet Academy, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Link 5 is a hyperlink to the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Online Version.

¹⁶ These browsers include, but are not limited to, Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer.

2. The Qualification Questionnaire Page

The Qualification Questionnaire Page is displayed when Link 1 is activated. Appendix B: Figure 2 is a display of the Qualification Questionnaire. To complete the questionnaire, respondents must enter personal information such as gender, academic grade-point averages (GPA), college entrance examination scores, and ASVAB scores. When the prospect activates the Submit Qualifications Criteria Button, the data are matched against a database of Navy ratings. The results of the database query are returned to the respondent on the Results Page.

Currently, recruits are offered Navy jobs based on combinations of scores on ASVAB test composites and the AFQT. The ASVAB is administered to candidates subsequent to contact by a recruiter. Because the ORS is accessible to individuals who may not have contacted a recruiter, such indicators as grade point average and college entrance examination scores are necessary. This is especially true in the case of individuals who have not taken the ASVAB. To accommodate these prospects, it is necessary to develop a rating database that converts GPA, college entrance exams¹⁷, etc., into compatible conditional rating matches. Converting GPA, PSAT, SAT, ACT, and other such test scores for use as military job predictors creates a broader base of prospects from which to draw.

3. The Results Page

The Results Page is displayed when the Navy rating query is completed. Appendix B: Figure 3 shows the Results Page. This page presents all of the jobs for

¹⁷ College entrance examinations include the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and the ACT.

which a respondent is conditionally qualified. These results are based on the information that the respondent entered into the Qualification Questionnaire. All of the results are subject to the verification of the information that was entered, medical examination, background check, and any other standards by which recruit candidates are routinely evaluated.

The Navy ratings that are returned on this page are presented as hyperlinks. The mock-up is designed to return the same three ratings for any combination of Qualification Questionnaire responses. The ratings that are returned are Avionics Technician, Sonar Technician, and Hospitalman.

The respondent has the option to activate any of the job hyperlinks to learn more about a particular rating. Activating any of these links initiates the retrieval of a page specifically designated for each rating. For example, activating Link 6, the Avionics Technician hyperlink, initiates the retrieval of the Avionics Technician Page (Appendix B: Figure 4). This page contains hyperlinks to job descriptions, training track, pay, benefits and bonuses, civilian equivalent, and possible duty station assignments. Due to funding constraints, the Duty Station Page could not be included in the mock-up. These pages are described in more detail later in this chapter.

Information is presented in audiovisual format, written format, or a combination of the two. The audiovisual format provides an interesting alternative to presenting the information. The written format reinforces the audiovisual format. Written information can be downloaded or printed for future reference. Due to funding and time constraints, audiovisual presentations could not be produced and included in the site.

4. The Job Description Page

Information about a particular rating is presented when Link 7 is activated from any Rating Page. For example, if Link 7 is activated from the Avionics Technician Rating Page (Appendix B: Figure 4), information about Avionics Technicians will be presented. This information is presented in audiovisual and written formats. Appendix B: Figure 5 depicts the Avionics Technician Job Description Page.

The audiovisual portion contains a video presentation of Avionics Technicians at work in sea and shore activities. The written format presents more detailed textual job description information about the specific rating.

5. The Training Track Page

Information about the typical training track for a particular rating is presented when Link 8 is activated from any Rating Page. This information is presented in audiovisual and written formats. Appendix B: Figure 6 illustrates the Avionics Technician Training Track Page.

The audiovisual portion contains a video presentation of boot camp, classroom and laboratory environments, on-the-job training environments, and any other training environment that may be required for designation in a particular rating. This page also includes information such as the number of college credits that can be earned through Navy courses, e.g., Boot Camp, "A" School, leadership training, etc., and the degrees toward which these credits may be applied. Also included in this page is an estimate of the total cost of training a person in this rating, i.e., what the prospect might have to pay to obtain equivalent training in the civilian sector. The written format presents more detailed textual information about the specific training required for a rating.

6. The Pay, Benefits, and Bonuses Page

Information about pay, benefits, and bonuses is provided when Link 9 is activated. This information is presented in audiovisual and textual formats. Appendix B: Figure 7 shows the Avionics Technician Pay, Benefits, and Bonuses Page.

Pay information can include audiovisual presentations on current fiscal year pay charts, leave and earnings statements, Basic Allowance Housing (BAH), Basic Allowance Subsistence (BAS), Special Duty Pay, and other pay-related items. The audiovisual presentation is supplemented with downloadable text.

Benefits information can include audiovisual presentations on the benefits available to service members and their dependents. Benefits may include medical and dental coverage, education plans, legal assistance, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) and Exchange usage, and other such perquisites. This information is supplemented with downloadable text. Audiovisual presentations related to enlistment bonuses, reenlistment bonuses, and continuation pay are supplemented with downloadable text.

7. The Civilian Equivalent Page

Information about the transferability of specific Navy ratings to the civilian workplace is presented in audiovisual format and is activated when Link 10 is activated. This information can include equivalent civilian occupations, transferable college credits, and transferable skills to federal, state, union, and other organization's licensing requirements. Appendix B: Figure 8 displays the Avionics Technician Civilian Equivalent page. This information is supplemented with downloadable text.

8. The Contact a Recruiter Page

The Contact A Recruiter hyperlink is available from most pages. When a respondent activates Link 11, the Personal Information Page is retrieved. This page is displayed in Appendix B: Figure 9.

After the Personal Information Page has been retrieved, respondents enter the requested information and activate the Submit Button at the bottom of the page. After the Submit Button has been activated, the personal information can be processed by local and national crime computers and credit bureau databases. Upon completion of the background check, the processed information is transmitted, based on zip code, to the nearest recruiting command. A recruiter is assigned, by the local command, to contact the respondent. This page provides a means for recruiters to make more efficient use of their time by contacting respondents who have demonstrated an interest in the Navy and are likely to meet Navy standards.

9. The Apply for a Navy Job Page

An employment application package is activated when Link 12 is activated. Link 12 is available from most pages. This page is displayed in Appendix B: Figure 10. Due to funding constraints, the employment application package, which consists of online versions of all of the required forms for enlistment, is not included in the mock-up.

After the Employment Application Package Page has been retrieved, respondents enter the requested information, at their convenience, and initiate the employment application process. At any time during the completion process, the respondent can activate the Save Data Button. This feature is available to enable the respondent to take interim breaks during the process.

Throughout the completion process, periodic requests for information verification are initiated, as well as checks for incorrect or missing entries. Upon completion of the application, the respondent activates the Save And Submit Data Button. Once activated, the respondent's application package is stored in a database for later retrieval.

11. The Repeat Visitor Log-In Page

To encourage repeat visitation, it is necessary for ORS to be capable of retaining the identity and data of previous visitors for future retrieval. To maintain the trust of the site visitor, the log-in feature should afford the highest degree of personal confidentiality. Every effort must be made to prevent the use of the confidential log-in data by recruiters. Due to funding constraints, this link is inoperative, and the page is not included in the mock-up.

12. The Chat Rooms

Chat rooms are the backbone of ORS. They are a source of uncensored and verifiable information and acts as a proxy for the recruiter. ORS provides two separate chat rooms, one general and the other rating-specific.

The general chat room is available for persons to discuss topics such as basic training, pay, enlistment terms, and other questions that would normally be directed to a recruiter. Personnel qualified to adequately address such questions would host this chat room. This chat room is accessible by activating Link 3 on either the Home Page or any of the Rating Pages. Appendix B: Figure 11 provides an example of a simulated chat room.

The rating-specific chat rooms are accessible by activating Link 3 on either the Log-In Page or the Rating Page. These rooms are available to discuss topics related to a

specific rating. For example, if a respondent received a conditional qualification for the Avionics Technician rating, but wanted to learn more about that rating prior to initiating contact with a recruiter or completing an employment application, he or she could enter the Avionics Technician Chat Room. This room, possibly hosted by experienced and successful Avionics Technicians¹⁸, enables visitors to interact with the host and other respondents to learn the details of life as an Avionics Technician. Here, respondents can learn about the daily routine, advantages and disadvantages, and other aspects of being an Avionics Technician from someone actually working in the rating. Under the current recruiting system, prospects must rely mainly on information from a recruiter who may or may not have worked in a particular rating of interest to the respondent. Due to funding constraints, the chat room links are not included on the rating pages.

13. The Virtual Fleet Academy

The Virtual Fleet Academy Web Site is activated when Link 4 is activated. Because the Fleet Academy site is under construction, Link 4 is inoperative.

14. The Online Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and Personality Test

An "Online ASVAB" could be accessed when Link 5 is activated. This link is inoperative. This site provides a continuous opportunity for respondents to take a version of the ASVAB online, at their convenience. To preclude cheating or security breaches, only computers designated by DOD would be able to access this area. To be eligible to access this area, such computers must be equipped with personnel monitoring devices,

¹⁸ Experienced, qualified, and successful members within a particular rating are suggested as hosts of a chat room. To provide incentive, special duty pay could be authorized each month for personnel who host a chat room.

such as monitored video cameras, biometric identification devices, etc.; or be located in an area that is available to continuous monitoring by a proctor (e.g., guidance counselor, recruiter, civil service employee, etc).

The availability of this examination online is beneficial to the rating search process. For example, respondents who have not yet taken the ASVAB, or refuse to take the ASVAB due to anxiety about subsequent recruiter pressure, can take the exam online, obtain a score, and enter the score on the Qualification Questionnaire Page to obtain a more accurate person/rating match.

An online personality test could be presented to prospects to obtain a profile of their personal characteristics and values. This profile would then be matched against a database of profiles of successful personnel in each of the ratings. This personality profile, when combined with ASVAB/AFQT scores, is necessary to obtain a more accurate rating match.

15. The Recruiter Prospect Page

Appendix B: Figure 11 shows the Recruiter Prospect Page. This page is forwarded to the local recruiting command of any prospect who activates the Submit Button from the Contact Recruiter Page or the Employment Application Package Page.

The Recruiter Prospect Page includes the prospect's personal information, academic performance information, achievement test information, preliminary qualification for ratings, and criminal and credit histories. With this information, the recruiter can evaluate each prospect for suitability to the Navy, arrange contact appointments, and pre-schedule MEPS appointments.

IV. FOCUS GROUP EVALUATION OF ORS

A. INTRODUCTION

A focus group was assembled to evaluate a mock-up of the Online Recruiting Station. The primary goals of the focus group discussion were threefold: to determine if members of the target market could identify the purpose of the ORS; to obtain feedback from typical users on the concept and features of the ORS; and, finally, to determine if young, potential recruits would use the ORS to enlist.

The focus group consisted of 10 recruit-aged participants and a facilitator. The ages of the participants ranged from 16- to 18-years old. There were 8 male and 2 female participants. Eight of the participants were students at Monterey High School. The remaining participants were students at the York School (a private school) in Monterey. All of the Monterey High School students were enrolled in the school's "Naval Junior ROTC" (NJROTC) program. The author acted as facilitator. The participants were not randomly selected and are not necessarily representative of any segment of the population; nevertheless, because the participants were part of the Navy's target market, the opinions obtained in the session are considered generally reflective of the population from which they are drawn.

B. APPROACH

The focus group session consisted of a 20-minute period of hands-on navigation through and interaction with the Web site, followed by a 90-minute videotaped discussion period.

Prior to the hands-on portion of the session, participants were told that they would be evaluating a new Web site. There was no discussion concerning the purpose of the Web site, as this would be left to the participants to determine. Participants were then presented with the Home Page of the ORS. From this page, they were free to navigate through the site at their own pace, with the only requirements being that each hyperlink must be activated and each page of the site must be visited. After approximately 20 minutes, all participants indicated that they had complied with the requirements and had a "good feel" for the site.

The participants were then moved to another room to discuss the site. Prior to the discussion, participants were encouraged to speak freely, agree or disagree with other participants, and involve the facilitator as little as possible. From the onset of the discussion, the participants immediately offered opinions, carried the conversation well, and distributed the conversation equally. No participant excluded himself or herself from contributing to the discussion. No participant dominated the discussion.

C. FINDINGS

The participants were afforded ample opportunity to express themselves, but the facilitator still guided the discussion to include certain themes. These themes are discussed below, in terms of goals set for the study in using the focus group.

1. Determine if Participants Are Able to Identify the Purpose of the Mock-Up

When asked to discuss their perceptions of the overall purpose of the ORS, participants offered essentially the same response. The participants perceived the ORS as a "replacement for recruiters" and "a place to go to learn about the military."

These responses indicate that the participants understood the primary purpose of the ORS; that is, as a potential replacement for recruiters. Additionally, the group members identified a secondary purpose of the ORS: a place to obtain information and learn about the military.

2. Determine Reactions of Participants to ORS if They Were Prospective

Recruits

When asked to discuss their perceptions of the effect of the ORS on themselves as prospective recruits, the participants offered a broad range of ideas. The most immediate responses were that the ORS was an "asset" that provided an "unbiased place to find out which jobs I qualify for without worrying about a recruiter trying to stick me in a job because there is a quota." Another response along those lines was "this program is not going to try to persuade you to do something that you aren't sure about."

Comments such as, "I can access it anytime I feel like," "if I get tired, I can leave and come back later" and "it's not intimidating," were met with overwhelming support from the other participants.

These comments indicate that the ORS mock-up was able to effectively convey the true essence of the concept: Provide an unbiased¹⁹, non-threatening medium, available around-the-clock from anywhere in the world for prospects to discover the opportunities the military has to offer them as individuals. One participant emphasized this point when he said, "I can find out which jobs I qualify for, find out more about that job, and determine which job is best for me rather than relying on someone else to tell me

¹⁹ In the true essence of the ORS, "unbiased" refers not only to quota pressure, but, more importantly, to race, religion, age, and gender.

what they think is best for me." Such a comment was expected from a person described as part of the "Millenium Generation."

3. Determine Which Features of the Site the Participants Liked or Disliked

The opportunity to critique the ORS was deliberately reserved until this part of the discussion²⁰. Prior to this point, the participants were still establishing themselves as a group. To discuss this theme any earlier may have resulted in a bias for positive comments, as participants may have been reluctant to be critical out of courtesy. Having determined that the group had "matured," the participants were asked to critically discuss the features²¹ of the ORS.

The first comment was that, "[ORS] is better than "Navyjobs.com," which is just an online brochure. [ORS] is interactive. I like the fact that I can get instant results." Immediately following this comment was, "I think [ORS] is dry the way it is now. It looks like somebody knew what [he or she] wanted to do, but didn't really feel like doing it. There is lots of room for improvement." This comment was invaluable to the remainder of the discussion. From that point, the participants opened up and offered very productive suggestions for improvement.

The participants began the discussion with comments on the chat room feature. Participants indicated that, although the chat rooms were an excellent way to get first-hand information about their specific interests, they were somewhat impersonal and

²⁰ Groups of people brought together for a common purpose often experience four stages of maturing. These stages are storming, forming, norming, and conforming, and were first identified by Peter Scholtes (1988) in "The Team Handbook." While each group matures at its own rate, it is the responsibility of the facilitator to monitor the maturing process and determine when to introduce topics which can be comfortably handled by the group. Failure to do so results in less than optimum production by the group.

²¹ The features of the ORS include audiovisual-, graphic-, and textual presentations, chat rooms, online testing, online evaluation of job qualifications, and online applications.

cumbersome, particularly if they were crowded. Follow-on suggestions included adding video or a satellite link to the chat room, so prospects could see the person hosting the chat room "[which] would give you the feeling that you were talking with a person rather than a computer screen."

One participant indicated that, if the chat room had a lot of people in it, he may not be able to get all of his questions answered, or that it would take a long time to do so. His suggestion was that, if people were interested in general information about a particular rating, they could stay in the main chat room. But if someone had some specific, personal questions that they wanted to ask, that person could go to a private chat room with a host for a limited amount of time to address these issues.

Another concern about the chat rooms related to the reliability of the information that the host disseminates. The participants were adamant that anyone who hosted a chat room would necessarily have to be competent in a rating and successful in one's career. The participants implied that the availability of the host's resume would lend credibility to the information that the host disseminates²².

Participants raised concerns about the consistency of the information. The other participants dispelled these concerns, for the most part, by suggesting that chat rooms often have more than one person at any given time. The presence of others and the experience they bring from previous discussions allow for a good crosscheck of the information that is disseminated. One participant mentioned that, "as you use the chat room over and over, you begin to develop a rapport with a particular host. From there, you begin to trust the information much like you do with a recruiter."

Overall, the chat room was relatively well-received. The participants thought that the security offered by the community chat room, combined with the intimacy of the private chat room, were benefits similar to those offered by the current recruiting system. One benefit about the chat rooms excited the participants more than any other. They liked the idea that they could "learn about the job they wanted to do from people who are now doing it." They were concerned that if, for example, they were interested in becoming an Avionics Technician, but their recruiter was a Yeoman, they would be getting second-hand information at best and were skeptical of the reliability of such information. One participant added, "If I wanted to go to college, I would like to ask someone in my rating if they have time to do it, because I know [that people in some Navy occupations] don't get enough time to go to college."

The discussion shifted to address the "dryness" of the ORS mock-up. The participants focused here on the absence of adequate aural and visual stimuli.

The first suggestions for video clips centered on boot camp. Participants indicated that videos or satellite links to boot camp would dispel anxiety and encourage those who may be afraid of the unknown to consider the military as a career option. But one participant indicated, "videos might drive some people away. If they were not really physically fit enough to do boot camp, they would not want to go; but if they were already in boot camp, they could get in shape while they were there and would have to stay." One participant responded to this by saying, "it is better to let someone know what they are getting into beforehand rather than spend the time and money to get them there and have them quit or fail. It is a horrible feeling to start something and not finish."

²² Cynicism and wariness are characteristic of the "Millenium Generation." (Tulgan, 1997)

The discussion then shifted to the daily routine of sailors. The participants overwhelmingly liked the idea of "seeing someone at work rather than relying on a recruiter to try to describe it." Again, satellite links were mentioned. One participant said, "if there was a satellite link to, say, [someone in my rating] working on the [aircraft carrier, USS Carl Vinson], I would check it out everyday. That would be something I would go to school and tell my friends, 'You have got to see this'."

Lehnus and Wilson (1996) suggest that "young men realize many current movies are not realistic portrayals of military life." Contrary to this conclusion, one participant offered the following statement: "A lot of my friends were interested in going into the military. Then they saw *GI Jane* and said, 'I'm not going to join that type of organization.' But if they saw videos of what really goes on from day-to-day, it would counter [the Hollywood] portrayal of the military."

4. Determine if the Participants Would Use the ORS to Enlist

Participants were asked to discuss the likelihood that they would use the ORS to enlist. One participant remarked that, "if I was certain that I was going to join the military, I would use it. Basically, the chat room does the same thing that a recruiter could do." Another suggested: "[ORS] eliminates the middle man. It would be good for me."

Seven out of the ten participants, however, felt otherwise. Comments were made such as: "[ORS] is good on one hand, but bad on the other because I am a one-on-one person, so it wouldn't be good for me. But it might be good for someone else." The following comment expressed the feeling of about 70 percent of the group: "I would, at some point, need to make human contact before signing away four years of my life."

5. Solicit Other Relevant Comments

The final part of the discussion was devoted to allowing open comments from the participants. Interestingly, the majority of these comments focused on the potential efficiency the ORS could bring to the current recruiting process. One participant indicated that the MEPS process could be shortened if a hyperlink were included on this site. Others suggested that ORS would "save the recruiter time" and "save a lot of paperwork." Several comments were made that described the role of the recruiter changing to that of an "advocate" and "mentor" instead of a pushy, "used-car salesman."

One participant was concerned that the ORS excluded information for officer programs. He said that he would be interested to learn about officer commissioning sources and what officers do in their daily routines.

One participant provided an interesting suggestion regarding the job qualification process. He commented that, instead of having prospects enter their test scores or grade-point average, they should be offered the option of entering the job they find most appealing and then have the ORS return the minimum scores required to qualify for that position. This would allow the prospects to see for themselves whether they would qualify, so that some self-selection could be made without the early interference of a recruiter.

Finally, when each participant was asked to briefly state his or her feelings about the ORS concept, one participant said: "I give it two thumbs up!" The other participants agreed unanimously.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this study was to develop an ORS "mock-up" that would eventually assist military recruiting. A literature review was first conducted to provide a foundation of understanding regarding the optimum components of the ORS, or the features that would best suit the target market of potential recruits.

The literature review showed that the current system of military recruiting, which has been in place since the end of the draft in 1973, suffers from problems of distrust, misperception, and inefficiency. The distrust that youth have for recruiters and the misperceptions these youth harbor about the military may hinder the services' ability to recruit high-quality personnel. At the same time, inefficiency within recruiting commands results in unnecessary fiscal obligations and places a strain on operational manning requirements.

The review of previous research also indicates that the military has not explored the full potential of the Internet. Strategically-thinking companies are investing now in ways to incorporate the Internet into their daily operations. These companies see the Internet as a key element to successfully conducting business in the future. Yet, there is no evidence that the military shares the private sector's respect for this medium.

Previous research suggests that the youth of today tend to be very impressed by technology and they view it as a way to find original solutions to previously intractable problems. Unlike earlier generations, today's youth do not feel threatened by progress. The reactions and responses by the participants in the focus group assembled for the

present study tend to validate this research. Members of the focus group were very excited about the possibilities of the ORS and were quick to mention how they were comfortable using the ORS as an alternative to a recruiter. They were eager to offer suggestions for improvement of the ORS. They saw these improvements as important to the success of the ORS. Failure to incorporate any of these ideas, they agreed, would result in "just another Navyjobs.com."

The focus group session tended to confirm that the "mock up" design was appropriate for the target population. The focus group readily identified a primary purpose of the ORS as a replacement for the recruiter and a secondary purpose as an information source about the military. It is important to note that the "mock up" was intended to represent a concept. It was not intended to be a prototype, in the sense of a fully-functioning model. The responses of the focus group indicated that the concept of ORS can be conveyed with minimal exposure to the "mock up."

The Online Recruiting Station has the potential to resolve many of the problems currently faced by military recruiting commands. It is a fresh alternative to the traditional approaches of the military when recruiting becomes difficult. The current organizational structure of military recruiting commands is large and inefficient. On top of that, recruiters are perceived by many youth as being less than trustworthy and they currently represent the first line of contact between a prospective recruit and the military. Adding more recruiters just does not make sense when the factors are taken into account. Perhaps it is time for the military to consider alternatives that will not only solve the persistent recruiting problem, but be productive well into the next century.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Further development should be made of the Online Recruiting Station. To ensure the success of the development process, more research is needed on issues that may affect the design of an ORS prototype. Specific areas of research include the following:

1. Technological Requirements

An in-depth study should assess the external and internal hardware and software requirements of such a project. The assessment of external hardware and software should include considerations such as bandwidth capabilities and requirements, PC requirements, security requirements, and other factors that would be essential to introducing the ORS as a "virtual recruiter."

The assessment of the internal hardware and software should include considerations such as PC, audiovisual, and browser requirements, database creation and query requirements, forms creation and management, and other factors essential to ORS introduction.

2. Organizational Restructuring

An in-depth analysis is necessary of the organizational demands that would result from implementing the ORS. For example, one area of importance would be military recruiting from a DOD perspective, including the possible creation of a joint recruiting command. A separate analysis could examine the effects of ORS on Navy recruiting and, particularly, the organizational structure of the Navy Recruiting Command organizational structure. Also, a separate analysis could be undertaken regarding the new role of the recruiter as an adjunct or support to the ORS.

3. Cost

Further research should examine the costs of implementing an ORS. This analysis should consider the cost associated with designing a working ORS, distributing the appropriate hardware and software necessary to make the ORS accessible, closing or realigning recruiting stations, restructuring the Navy Recruiting Command and other factors as necessary. A separate analysis could also be undertaken to consider the impact of the above costs on DOD recruiting.

4. Testing

More information is needed on the specific features and content of the ORS prototype. This information could be gathered through focus groups consisting of representative samples of the target population, and using the mock-up from this thesis. A separate study is required to determine the location and number of Beta test sites.

C. SUMMARY

The suggestions for further research presented here are not likely to be the only areas that require investigation. As the research and development process evolves, newer and more relevant issues are likely to surface. These issues will necessarily be addressed by applying what had been learned to that point, as well as incorporating new technology that was previously unavailable or unanticipated.

Some people may feel threatened by the ORS concept. But, in these times of dwindling budgets and increased workload, the ORS should be seen as an asset, or a tool, that will allow more work to be accomplished with fewer person-hours.

Currently, operational personnel are being impressed into recruiting duty to help bolster the military's recruiting force. Operational commands, already functioning at less

than optimal personnel levels, can ill-afford further decimation of their ranks. The ORS should ease this burden by requiring fewer personnel to be routed to recruiting jobs.

But the Online Recruiting Station will not materialize overnight. The research and development process may take years before a fully-functional prototype is available for wide-scale testing. With that in mind, the military must commit now to fund the development of this important step into the future of recruiting.

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES FROM FALL 1997 YATS

(Source: Fall 1997 Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS) Codebook)

Q628A: Within the past year, have you talked to a military recruiter?

	<u>Unweighted Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Inapplicable	5188	51.05
Yes	1508	14.84
No	3464	34.08
Don't Know	2	0.02
Refused	1	0.01

Note: Only half of the sample received this question. The other half received question 628C. The control/selection of this variable was dependent upon the variable ARFLAG1 which is described in further detail in the "ID and Control" section of the Codebook.

Q628C: Within the past year, have you talked to a military recruiter to get information about the military?

	<u>Unweighted Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Inapplicable	4975	48.95
Yes	1109	10.91
No	4078	40.13
Don't Know	0	0.00
Refused	1	0.01

Note: Only half of the sample received this question. The other half received question 628A. The control/selection of this variable was dependent upon the variable ARFLAG1 which is described in further detail in the "ID and Control" section of the Codebook.

Q628: Have you ever talked to any military recruiter?

	<u>Unweighted Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Inapplicable	2617	25.75
Yes	3296	32.43
No	4236	41.68
Don't Know	12	0.12
Refused	2	0.02

Sub-Population: Youth who have not talked to a military recruiter within the past year. [Q628A ≠ 1 and Q628C ≠ 1]

Q632U: As far as you know, has a recruiter tried to contact you?

	<u>Unweighted Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Inapplicable	5913	58.18
Yes	663	6.52
No	3550	34.93
Don't Know	34	0.33
Refused	3	0.03

Sub-Population: Youth who have not talked to a military recruiter within the past year. [Q628 ≠ 1]

Q632VPAR: Would you say that you have not talked to any recruiters because your parents or someone else told them that you were not available or interested?

	<u>Unweighted Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Inapplicable	9500	93.48
Yes	191	1.88
No	452	4.45
Don't Know	20	0.2
Refused	0	0

Youth who have never talked to a military recruiter but have had a recruiter try to contact them. [Q628 ≠ 1 and Q632U = 1]

Q632VYOU: Would you say that you have not talked to any recruiters because you specifically avoided talking to recruiters?

	<u>Unweighted Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Inapplicable	9500	93.48
Yes	332	3.27
No	320	3.15
Don't Know	11	0.11
- Refused	0	0

Youth who have never talked to a military recruiter but have had a recruiter try to contact them. [Q628 ≠ 1 and Q632U = 1]

Q632W: Have any of your friends talked seriously to a recruiter about joining the military?

	<u>Unweighted Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Inapplicable	5913	58.18
Yes	2314	22.77
No	1809	17.8
Don't Know	125	1.23
Refused	2	.02

Sub-Population: Youth who have never talked to a military recruiter. [Q628 ≠ 1]

Q632M: Recruiters present a truthful picture of military service.

	<u>Unweighted Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Inapplicable	6039	59.42
Strongly Agree	683	6.72
Somewhat Agree	1757	17.29
Neither	590	5.81
Somewhat Disagree	665	6.54
Strongly Disagree	341	3.36
Don't Know	85	0.84
Refused	3	0.03

Sub-Population: Youth who have ever talked to a military recruiter or have a friend who talked seriously to a recruiter. [Q628A = 1 or Q628C = 1 or Q632W = 1] Note: Only half of the sample received this question. The other half received question 632M1. The control/selection of this variable was dependent upon the variable ARFLAG3 which is described in further detail in the "ID and Control" section of the Codebook.

Q632M: Recruiters sometimes mislead people about military service.

	<u>Unweighted Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Inapplicable	6060	59.63
Strongly Agree	747	7.35
Somewhat Agree	1451	14.28
Neither	670	6.59
Somewhat Disagree	773	7.61
Strongly Disagree	387	3.81
Don't Know	72	0.71
Refused	3	0.03

Sub-Population: Youth who have ever talked to a military recruiter or have a friend who talked seriously to a recruiter. [Q628A = 1 or Q628C = 1 or Q632W = 1] Note: Only half of the sample received this question. The other half received question 632M. The control/selection of this variable was dependent upon the variable ARFLAG3 which is described in further detail in the "ID and Control" section of the Codebook.

Q632P: Recruiters don't use "high pressure" sales tactics on people if they are not interested in military service.

	<u>Unweighted Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Inapplicable	6095	59.97
Strongly Agree	609	5.99
Somewhat Agree	950	9.35
Neither	467	4.6
Somewhat Disagree	1088	10.71
Strongly Disagree	822	8.09
Don't Know	130	1.28
Refused	2	0.02

Sub-Population: Youth who have ever talked to a military recruiter or have a friend who talked seriously to a recruiter. [Q628A = 1 or Q628C = 1 or Q632W = 1] Note: Only half of the sample received this question. The other half received question 632P1. The control/selection of this variable was dependent upon the variable ARFLAG3 which is described in further detail in the "ID and Control" section of the Codebook.

Q632P1: Recruiters use "high pressure" sales tactics to get people to join the military.

	<u>Unweighted Count</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Inapplicable	6064	59.08
Strongly Agree	1123	11.05
Somewhat Agree	1201	11.82
Neither	480	4.72
Somewhat Disagree	746	7.34
Strongly Disagree	522	5.14
Don't Know	84	0.83
Refused	3	0.03


Sub-Population: Youth who have ever talked to a military recruiter or have a friend who talked seriously to a recruiter. [Q628A = 1 or Q628C = 1 or Q632W = 1] Note: Only half of the sample received this question. The other half received question 632P. The control/selection of this variable was dependent upon the variable ARFLAG3 which is described in further detail in the "ID and Control" section of the Codebook.

APPENDIX B: SNAPSHOTS OF ORS PAGES

Figure 1. ORS Home Page

U.S. NAVY

Online Recruiting Station



[Qualifications Form](#)

[Repeat Visitor Log In](#)

[Chat with The Navy](#)

[Play Navy Games](#)

[Take ASVAB Test](#)

~~You are bright, athletic, and honest!~~

~~You have strong ideals!~~

~~You want to make a difference in this complex world!~~


~~You want to use your time in the most efficient way possible!~~

Then YOU and the NAVY would make a great team!

1 Fill out the Qualifications Form.

2 Review the list of jobs for which you are qualified.

3 Find out as much as you can about the job(s) for which you are interested.



There are thousands of jobs in the NAVY for which you could be qualified. The NAVY On-line recruiting station makes it easy for anyone to apply for employment with the NAVY.

4 Get more information sent to you from your nearest NAVY recruiter. Or

5 Fill out an employment application to apply for a NAVY job.

Link 1

Link 2

Link 3

Link 4

Link 5

Link 11

Link 12


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Figure 2. ORS Qualifications Questionnaire Page


U.S. NAVY

Online Recruiting Station



[Back](#)

1 Fill out the Qualifications Form.



Welcome to the Navy Jobs Selection Criteria Page

Answering all questions will insure that you are provided with the most accurate listing of the Navy jobs for which you are qualified.

Qualifications Form

I am:

My highest level of formal education is:

My High School Grade Point Average (GPA) is:

My Undergraduate Grade Point Average (GPA) is:

I scored: on the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT).

I scored: on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

I scored: on the ACT Assessment Test (ACT).

I scored: on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASYAB).


2 Review the list of jobs for which you are qualified.

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Figure 3. ORS Results Page


U.S. NAVY

Online Recruiting Station



[Back](#)

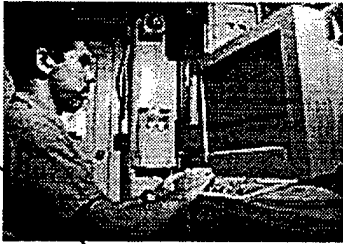
2 Review the list of jobs for which you are qualified.



Based on the information you entered, you are qualified for the following Navy jobs!!!

Avionics Technician
Sonar Technician(INOP)
Hospitalman(INOP)

3 Find out as much as you can about the job(s) for which you are interested.



Great Pay!

[Link 6](#)

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Figure 4. ORS Job Description Page

U.S. NAVY

Online Recruiting Station

Back

Job Description

Training

Pay, Benefits & Bonuses

Civilian Equivalent


4

Get more information sent to you from your nearest NAVY recruiter. Or

5

Fill out an employment application to apply for a NAVY job.

Avionics Electronics Technician



Link 7

Link 8

Link 9

Link 10

Link 11

Link 12

An Avionics Electronics Technician assigned to Aviation Intermediate Maintenance Dept (AIMD) on board USS Nimitz (CVN68) operating in the Arabian Gulf, repairs the wiring harness on an aerial camera magazine from an F-14 Tomcat.

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Figure 5. ORS Training Track Page

U.S. NAVY

Online Recruiting Station

Back
Job Description
Training
Pay, Benefits & Bonuses
Civilian Equivalent

- 4 Get more information sent to you from your nearest NAVY recruiter. Or
- 5 Fill out an employment application to apply for a NAVY job.

Avionics Electronics Technician Training

The typical training track for the Avionics Technician begins with 14 weeks of recruit training at Naval Base Great Lakes, near Chicago, Illinois. Here, you will learn about military tradition and protocol.

Upon successful completion of this program, you will be assigned to basic

and advanced electronics schools where you will acquire the skills necessary to perform the duties of an Avionics Technician.

When you finish with your formal avionics training, you will be assigned to an aviation squadron. Here, you will refine the skills you learned in the formal training, by applying them to real, operational, Navy aircraft. You will receive valuable On-The-Job Training (OJT) from experienced, more senior Avionics Technicians. Periodically, you will be tested on your skills and knowledge. The results of these tests will be used in

determining your advancement through the ranks.

completion of airborne Naval missions.

If you are talented and determined enough, you may opt to compete for a seat at the Naval Aircrew Candidate School, in Pensacola, Florida. Here you will learn the leadership and survival skills necessary for Naval aircrew. Upon successful completion of this very selective and demanding school, you will be designated a Naval Aircrewman. With this designation, you will take an active part in the successful


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Figure 6. ORS Pay, Benefits & Bonuses Page

U.S. NAVY

Online Recruiting Station



Back

Job Description


Training

Pay, Benefits & Bonuses

Civilian Equivalent

4 Get more information sent to you from your nearest NAVY recruiter. Or

5 Fill out an employment application to apply for a NAVY job.




Travel!

Joining the Navy could help you to see the world. You could be stationed in places like Italy, Japan, Australia, or San Diego. You will also have time to travel during your time off.

Avionics Electronics Technician

Pay, Benefits & Bonuses



Pay
You will receive pay according to your rank and years of service, just like every other sailor. But should you elect to take-on and successfully complete Naval Aircrew Candidate School, you will receive enlisted flight pay of up to \$400 per month.


Benefits
The Navy has better benefits than most civilian employers.

Housing or housing allowance and money for meals

- 30 days of vacation with pay earned each year
- Advanced education at little or no cost
- Comprehensive medical and dental care with no doctor bills
- \$200,000 Life Insurance Policy for \$16 a month
- Discounted travel
- An excellent retirement program

These are only a few of the benefits

Navy




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Figure 7. ORS Civilian Equivalent Page

U.S. NAVY

Online Recruiting Station



Back

Job Description

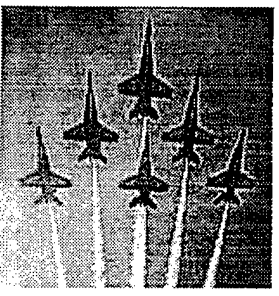
Training

Pay, Benefits & Bonuses

Civilian Equivalent

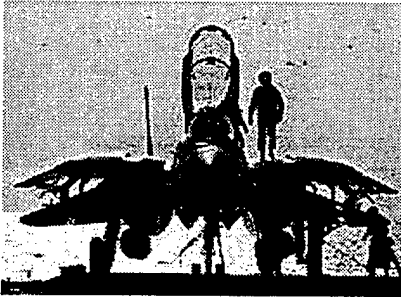
4 Get more information sent to you from your nearest NAVY recruiter. **Or**

5 Fill out an employment application to apply for a NAVY job.



Avionics Electronics Technician

Civilian Equivalent and Transferable Skills



Civilian Equivalent
Navy Avionics Technician receive training that can enable them to attain the FAA's Airframes and Powerplant Technician Qualification. Avionics Technicians are employed by every major airline and every corporate and civil aviation maintenance divisions. They may also work for aircraft manufacturers and other organizations that have fleets of airplanes or helicopters.

Helpful Attributes
Helpful school courses include

- math and shop mechanics.
- Interest in solving problems
- Interest in electricity and how electrical equipment works
- Ability to work with tools

Work Environment
Avionics Technicians usually work indoors, in aircraft hangers, airplanes, and repair shops. They may also work on aircraft parked outdoors.

Physical Demands
Normal color vision is required to work with color-coded wiring.


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Figure 8. ORS Personal Information Page

U.S. NAVY


Online Recruiting Station



[Back](#)
[Job Description](#)
[Training](#)
[Pay, Benefits & Bonuses](#)
[Civilian Equivalent](#)



Request for Navy Recruiter Assistance



Complete the following form below. When you have entered all of the requested information, click SUBMIT. This request will be forwarded to a Navy recruiter in your area. He or she will then contact you about the information you requested.

Information Request Form

First name:

Middle name:

Last name:

Telephone number: - -

Street address: Apt. No.:

City:

State: Zip Code:

Country:

Are you a United States citizen?:

☒ Yes
☐ No

Social Security Number: - -

My age is:

My height in inches is:

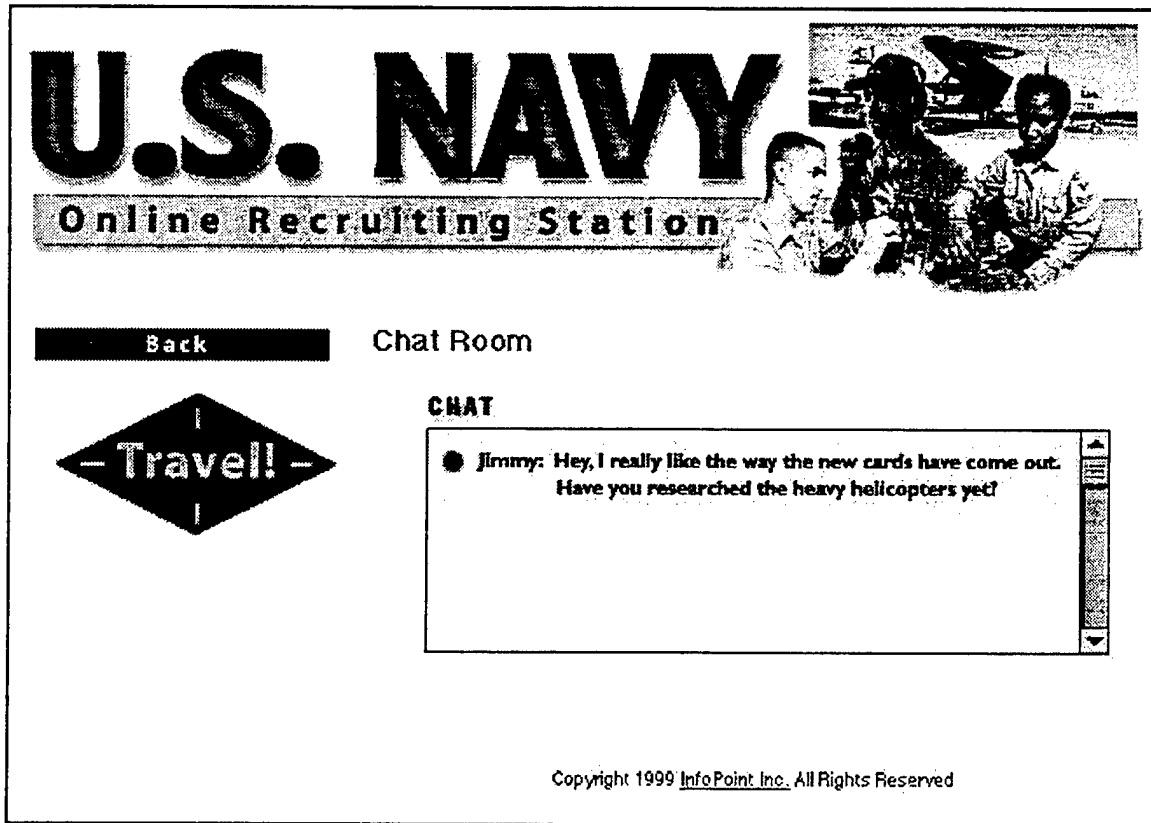
My weight in pounds is:

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Figure 9. ORS Prospect Information Page

Recruiter Prospect Data	
Personal Data	
Name:	<input type="text"/>
Address:	<input type="text"/>
Telephone number:	<input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/>
E-mail:	<input type="text"/>
Sex:	<input type="text"/>
GPA:	<input type="text"/>
PSAT:	<input type="text"/> ASYAB: <input type="text"/>
SAT:	<input type="text"/> AFQT: <input type="text"/>
ACT:	<input type="text"/>
Rating Eligibility Avionics Technician Sonar Technician Hospitalman	
Criminal/Credit History	
Criminal Record: <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
Credit Rating: <input checked="" type="radio"/> Good <input type="radio"/> Bad	
<input type="button" value="PRINT DATA"/>	<input type="button" value="RETRIEVE NEXT RECORD"/>
<input type="button" value="QUIT"/>	
Photos are U.S. Navy Photos.	
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Figure 10. ORS Chat Room Page



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